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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000351

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FOR EAP/MTS AARON FORSBERG

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SUBJECT: TIMOR LESTE: IN AFTERMATH OF ASSASSINATION
ATTEMPTS, PORTUGAL CONSIDERS SENDING ADDITIONAL GENDARMES

REF: DILI 0040

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Classified By: Dep P/E Counselor Cari Enav for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1.(SBU)Portugal is closely monitoring developments in its former colony of Timor Leste but has no immediate plans to send additional paramilitary troops to help stabilize the situation following the attempted assassination of President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao. Although not responsible for security around the President,s home, Portuguese forces and emergency personnel arrived at the scene shortly after receiving a distress call, providing medical aid and transporting Ramos Horta to the Australian medical clinic. Portugal remains concerned about the volatile security situation in Dili, noting that deep-rooted problems persist despite the fact that renegade military officer Alfredo Reinado is out of the picture. Portuguese Ambassador to Canberra is in Darwin to demonstrate support for Timor Leste and concern for Ramos Horta.

No Additional Forces for Now

12. (C) The Foreign Minister's Advisor for Asian Affairs, Rita Laranjinha, told post that Portugal is closely monitoring developments in Timor Leste and that its paramilitary forces stationed there, the Guardia Nacional da Republica (GNR), are sending regular updates on the security situation. Portugal has no immediate plans to reinforce its 240 strong GNR presence, given the distance and the fact that Australia has already sent over 200 additional military and police personnel since the assassination attempt. The government will carefully consider Timorese requests for such assistance when asked, probably within the next few days, as noted by visiting Timorese Parliament President Fernando Lamasa de Araujo to government officials on February 11. Lamasa de Araujo, who was shocked by these events, according to Larinjinha, departed Lisbon for Dili on February 12. In a separate February 11 conversation on the subject, Political Director Bramao Ramos told Ambassador Stephenson that he expected Timor Leste to ask for additional GNR forces shortly.

13. (C) Note: During a January trip to Dili, Minister of Interior Rui Pereira told Timorese officials that GNR forces would remain in Timor Leste until the end of 2008 but would not make any long term commitments. The government had been

awaiting a February UN decision to extend the UNMIT mission before committing to a continued GNR presence, Laranjinha noted. This UN decision will likely be postponed in light of the assassination attempt as Special UN Envoy Atul Kare has just left New York for Dili. End Note.

GNR) First Responders to Ramos Horta Attack

14. (C) Laranjinha had no comment regarding the breach of security at Ramos Horta's compound, noting that the Australians and Timorese are responsible for security there. She did note, however, that immediately following the attack, the GNR and Portuguese emergency personnel received a distress call (it is unclear from whom) and arrived at the compound within five minutes, providing first aid to Ramos Horta and transporting him to the Australian clinic for medical care. Laranjinha said that she had heard that Ramos Horta was expected to survive and would likely remain in the Darwin hospital for one month. The Portuguese were not involved in responding to the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, Laranjinha added.

Political Situation Still Volatile

15. (C) Reinado clearly hoped to destabilize the government by assassinating Ramos Horta and Gusmao although he did not appear to have any clear follow-up plan, Laranjinha said, noting that Reinado had no infrastructure in place to take over. The political balance of power remains quite volatile with deep-rooted problems continuing to plague the economy and efforts at national reconciliation. Even with the "charismatic" Reinado out of the picture, many of his followers will likely continue to harbor strong resentment against the government, Laranjinha said. Separately, Political Director Bramao Ramos expressed concern to Ambassador Stephenson regarding the response by Timorese

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youth, fearing a worse reaction to the death of Reinado than if Ramos Horta or Gusmao had died. Laranjinha commented that recent events may make it more difficult for Gusmao to reach agreement with opposition leader Mari Alkatiri on legislation to pardon past offenses, an idea Gusmao discussed with Portuguese Minister of Interior Pereira during his January visit to Dili.

Portuguese Ambassador Expresses Support in Darwin

16. (C) In addition to the Portuguese heads of state and government roundly condemning the attacks, the Portuguese Ambassador to Canberra has traveled to Darwin to express support for the Timorese government and concern for the health of Ramos Horta. He is in close communication with Timorese Foreign Minister de Costa -- who is also in Darwin -- and is relaying all developments back to Lisbon.

Comment

17. (C) The former colony of Timor Leste holds a special place in the Portuguese psyche and is the largest recipient of Portuguese foreign assistance and gendarmerie stationed abroad. A steady stream of visitors continues in both directions, with Defense Secretary of State Joao Mira Gomes traveling to Dili in December 2007 to sign the 2008-2010 Framework Agreement for Technical Military Cooperation, Minister for the Interior Rui Pereira traveling in January to discuss the security situation, and a planned visit by Minister of Justice in February to review strengthening the judicial system. In fact, at the time of the assassination attempts, Minister for Work and Social Security Jose Vieira da Silva was in Dili participating in a conference and Timorese Parliament President Fernando Lamasa de Araujo was in Lisbon meeting his counterparts. Although the Portuguese government often comments that its capability to deploy forces worldwide are stretched thin due to budget and military capacity constraints, Laranjinha implied that

Portugal would step up to the plate and provide additional forces to Timor Leste if asked.
Stephenson